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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KJUS](#)
SUBJECT: GOR ON TRACK TO ABOLISH DEATH PENALTY

¶1. (U) On 17 October Rwandan Justice Minister Tharcisse Karugarama held a press conference to announce a "nation wide debate" on the abolishment of the death penalty in Rwanda. Although it has not been implemented since 22 genocidaires were shot by firing squads in 1997, the subject has been a key issue in discussions between the GOR and the Arusha based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). ICTR chief prosecutor Hassan Bubcar Jallow described the death penalty as "the major stumbling block" in a final agreement to transfer ICTR detainees to Rwanda for trial. The discussion follows a 7 Oct meeting of the ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), chaired by President Kagame, that made the recommendation that the government abolish the death penalty. The cabinet then directed the Minister of Justice to launch public debates which, in addition to the press conference, will include a discussion at the Political Parties Forum on 19 Oct and debate with students and academic staff at the National University on 20 Oct.

¶2. (SBU) Comment. Although described as Kaurgarama as a "public debate" and that a consensus has not been reached on the issue, last week's RPF announcement likely means this decision has been made and the public discussion is a formality that will not impact the final outcome. In addition to resolving the ICTR transfer question, ending the death penalty will also allow Rwanda to discuss suspect transfers with European nations. However, there will still be opposition to the decision by genocide survivors groups and others who believe that the state should execute those found guilty of genocide. End comment.
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